

THE DONALDSON ADOPTION INSTITUTE

April 12, 2013

Dear Honorable Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee:

The Donaldson Adoption Institute is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research, policy and education think tank. We conduct research and analysis in order to improve adoption-related laws, policies and practices in order to better the lives of the affected children and families.

This correspondence regarding the Proposed Senate Operating Budget 2013-2015 explains why “control[ling] adoption costs by capping adoption support payments at 50 percent of the foster care maintenance payments for children with no special needs” could decrease adoptions from foster care and impair families’ abilities to meet their children’s basic needs. Such foster care versus adoption payment discrepancies provide a financial disincentive to adoption from the very pool of parents who are most likely to adopt.

The Adoption Institute – in partnership with the North American Council on Adoptable Children – recently published an [Issue Brief](#) (attached) illustrating that state funding for adoption subsidies is an essential tool for enabling the over 3,000 children and youth waiting in foster care in Washington to move into permanent, loving, successful families. As the Issue Brief demonstrates:

- Subsidies reduce financial barriers for families adopting children from foster care: Subsidies were developed to remove disincentives to adopt and ideally provide support at the level of foster care rates. Adoption assistance helps families – many foster parents or relatives who have very low incomes – meet the basic needs of children they adopt from the child welfare system. In Washington, 53 percent of children adopted in 2010 were adopted by foster parents; another 46 percent were adopted by relatives. Many parents report that they could not have afforded to adopt without a subsidy.
- Subsidies increase adoptions from the child welfare system: According to economic analyses, subsidies “have a positive and statistically significant effect on adoption rates” and “subsidy policy is the most important determinant of adoptions from foster care that is under the direct control of policymakers.” A federal evaluation found that “adoption subsidies are perhaps the single most powerful tool by which the child welfare system can encourage adoption and support adoptive families.”
- Adoption and subsidies are cost-effective: Adoption yields cost savings versus foster care; one economist found that every dollar invested in the adoption of a child from care returns about three dollars in public and private benefits.

I hope this information is useful, and hope you'll agree that increasing, not decreasing, adoption assistance is in the best interests of children, families and Washington state. Please feel free to contact me at apertman@adoptioninstitute.org or 617-332-8944 if you have questions. Thank you for your attention and for your important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Adam Pertman', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adam Pertman
Executive Director